

million in 1996 to \$4.2 billion in 2006. This increase of Chinese food imports over the last 10 years has not been followed by an equal increase of inspector activity. Therein lies the problem. Less than 2 percent of what comes over our border for human consumption is inspected. Yes, you heard me right, less than 2 percent.

As the Chinese share of American agricultural imports continues to grow, our domestic markets are impacted. For instance, unlike closely regulated domestic food additives, products like wheat gluten and vitamin C from China continue to flood our market. The last American vitamin C producer recently closed its doors, unable to compete against the flood of poorly regulated Chinese additives. So, when you take your vitamin pills, ask where the ingredients came from.

Earlier this year, Europe narrowly avoided disaster when a batch of vitamin A was contaminated with an additive which has caused infant deaths. Luckily, the additive was removed before it contaminated infant formula.

In a matter of weeks, the Chinese government went from denying the problems with their food chain to executing their lead food regulator and closing down almost 200 food factories. Estimates indicate that it will cost up to \$100 billion over the next 10 years to build an infrastructure capable of certifying and protecting against Chinese agricultural goods. This should cause any American sitting down at the dinner table to think about drawing arms. We simply must do better.

And that is what my bill, the Assured Food Safety Act of 2007, does. It uses a simple approach and puts the burden of keeping food safe on the producers and the country of origin. The bill will require countries exporting food products to the United States to provide a certificate of assured safety for each class of items. If safe certified food is found to cause consumer illnesses or deaths, producers can be held liable through our Federal courts. Producers liable for damage they cause? What a sensible idea.

As a condition to accessing the American market, a producer must be willing to stand behind the quality of their product. Instead of relying on an inconsistent patchwork of international food standards, our consumers will be given the power to manage abuses directly through our legal system.

The United States government has a duty not only to protect the American population from the bad apples of the world but to restore the American people's confidence in the food we eat. Next time you go to the grocery store to buy pet food or pick up onions, remember our bill.

Mr. Speaker, the Assured Food Safety Act closes a serious loophole in our food safety regimen. I urge my colleagues to cosponsor our bill and help the American people regain confidence in our system.

[From the Washington Post, April 23, 2007]
IT'S NOT JUST PET FOOD

(By Peter Kovacs)

Lost amid the anxiety surrounding the tainted U.S. pet food supply is this sobering reality: It's not just pet owners who should be worried. The uncontrolled distribution of low-quality imported food ingredients, mainly from China, poses a grave threat to public health worldwide.

Essential ingredients, such as vitamins used in many packaged foods, arrive at U.S. ports from China and, as recent news reports have underscored, are shipped without inspection to food and beverage distributors and manufacturers. Although they are used in relatively small quantities, these ingredients carry enormous risks for American consumers. One pound of tainted wheat gluten could, if undetected, contaminate as much as a thousand pounds of food.

Unlike imported beef, which is inspected at the point of processing by the U.S. Agriculture Department, few practical safeguards have been established to ensure the quality of food ingredients from China.

Often, U.S. officials don't know where or how such ingredients were produced. We know, however, that alarms have been raised about hygiene and labor standards at many Chinese manufacturing facilities. In China, municipal water used in the manufacturing process is often contaminated with heavy metals, pesticides and other chemicals. Food ingredient production is particularly susceptible to environmental contamination.

Equally worrisome, U.S. officials often lack the capability to trace foreign-produced food ingredients to their source of manufacture. In theory, the Bioterrorism Prevention Act of 2001 provides some measure of traceability. In practice, the act is ineffective and was not designed for this challenge. Its enforcement is also shrouded in secrecy by the Department of Homeland Security.

Even if Food and Drug Administration regulators wanted to crack down on products emanating from the riskiest foreign facilities, they couldn't, because they have no way of knowing which ingredients come from which plant. This is why officials have spent weeks searching for the original Chinese source of the contaminated wheat gluten that triggered the pet food crisis.

That it was pet food that got tainted—and that relatively few pets were harmed—is pure happenstance. Earlier this spring, Europe narrowly averted disaster when a batch of vitamin A from China was found to be contaminated with *Enterobacter sakazakii*, which has been proved to cause infant deaths. Thankfully, the defective vitamin A had not yet been incorporated into infant formula. Next time we may not be so fortunate.

Currently, most of the world's vitamins are manufactured in China. Unable to compete, the last U.S. plant making vitamin C closed a year ago. One of Europe's largest citric acid plants shut last winter, and only one vitamin C manufacturer operates in the West. Given China's cheap labor, artificially low prices and the unfair competitive climate it has foisted on the industry, few Western producers of food ingredients can survive much longer.

Western companies have had to invest heavily in Chinese facilities. These Western-owned plants follow strict standards and are generally better managed than their locally owned counterparts. Nevertheless, 80 percent of the world's vitamin C is now manufactured in China—much of it unregulated and some of it of questionable quality.

Europe is ahead of the United States in seeking greater accountability and traceability in food safety and importation.

But even the European Union's "rapid alert system" is imperfect. Additional action is required if the continent is to avoid catastrophes.

To protect consumers here, we must revise our regulatory approaches. The first option is to institute regulations, based on the European model, to ensure that all food ingredients are thoroughly traceable. We should impose strict liability on manufacturers that fail to enforce traceability standards.

A draconian alternative is to mount a program modeled on USDA beef inspection for all food ingredients coming into the country. This regimen would require a significant commitment of resources and intensive training for hundreds of inspectors.

Food safety is a bipartisan issue: Congress and the administration must work together and move aggressively to devise stricter standards. Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), chairman of the House Government Reform Committee, has deplored dangerous levels of lead in vitamin products originating in China. We must get to the bottom of this pressing public health issue, without self-defeating finger-pointing.

The United States is sitting on a powder keg with uncontrolled importation and the distribution of low-quality food ingredients. Before it explodes—putting more animals and people at risk—corrective steps must be taken.

The writer was president of NutraSweet Kelco Co. from 1994 to 1997. He is a management consultant to many large food ingredient companies.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE—HENRY MORGENTHAU

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, the Armenian genocide that was orchestrated by the Ottoman Empire from 1915 to 1918 is an irrefutable fact. Looking at the history of this catastrophic event, it is impossible to deny that this was genocide on all accounts.

Now, one way to bear witness to the truth is to make reference to firsthand accounts which were made at the time that the Armenian genocide occurred. Henry Morgenthau served with dignity as U.S. ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1913 to 1916. In the wake of surging nationalism in Turkey and alarmed at reports of the Armenian genocide, he repeatedly appealed to the U.S. Government to intervene, without success. Morgenthau addressed the genocide of the Armenians in a 1915 dispatch to the State Department in which he warned that "a campaign of race extermination is in progress."

He then appealed to Ottoman rulers, also without result, and finally, he published his opinions in his 1918 book of memoirs, "Ambassador